What is claimed is:

1. A method for modifying a database structure, the database being defined at least partly by commands that define a database schema containing tables with fields that have attributes, comprising the steps of:

providing a set of schema instructions defining a database structure according to a preexisting schema;

providing a corresponding set of schema instructions defining the database according to a modified schema;

parsing the schema instructions for both the preexisting schema and the modified schema, so as to produce two logical syntax trees wherein the database structure is defined by at least a subset of structure types and attributes of which at least one differs between the preexisting schema and the modified schema;

comparing the two logical syntax trees to generate a set of differences between said structure types and attributes of the subset;

generating from the differences a set of database modification commands for altering a database according to the preexisting schema, to a database according to the modified schema, with respect to the structure types and attributes of the subset.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the database structure is defined by an access and query language that defines tables of variables having labels and field characteristics.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the database structure is defined by ANSI structured query language (SQL).

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the database structure is defined by at least one aspect selected from the group consisting of: association of variable values with a key variable; association of variable values in at least one table; table name and labeling; variable name and labeling; aliases; table type; variable type; table dimensions; field length; variable numeric format; variable string format; identification of key variables; conditions for uniqueness; conditions for null-ability; and, default values.

5. The method of claim 2, wherein the schema instructions defining the database structure according to the preexisting schema are derived from an operational database,

and further comprising the step of modifying the operational database by applying the database modification commands thereto.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising: identifying at least one ambiguity in said comparing of the two logical syntax trees to generate the set of differences between said structure types and attributes of the subset; presenting said ambiguity to a user for resolution; accepting an input from the user for resolving the ambiguity; and wherein said generating of the database modification commands is at least partly based on said input from the user.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the set of differences are stored in a log file and wherein presenting the ambiguity comprises at least one of displaying and sending the log file to a user.

8. The method of claim 6, further comprising recording a log containing a representation of at least one of said differences and said input from the user.

9. The method of claim 6, wherein the ambiguity comprises a choice between one of at least two alternative database structures that comply with the modified schema.

10. The method of claim 6, wherein the ambiguity comprises a choice between one of at least two alternative modifications to the preexisting schema that proceed toward the modified schema.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the ambiguity comprises a choice between renaming at least one of a table and a variable in a table, versus deleting and replacing at least one of said table and the variable in said table.

12. A computer readable medium encoded with computer-executable instructions for controlling operation of a processor of a printing device to cause the processor to perform a method comprising:

providing a set of schema instructions defining a database structure according to a preexisting schema;

providing a corresponding set of schema instructions defining the database according to a modified schema;

parsing the schema instructions for both the preexisting schema and the modified schema, so as to produce two logical syntax trees wherein the database structure is defined by at least a subset of structure types and attributes of which at least one differs between the preexisting schema and the modified schema;

comparing the two logical syntax trees to generate a set of differences between said structure types and attributes of the subset;

generating from the differences a set of database modification commands for altering a database according to the preexisting schema, to a database according to the modified schema, with respect to the structure types and attributes of the subset.

13. The computer readable medium according to claim 12, wherein the database structure is defined by an access and query language that defines tables of variables having labels and field characteristics, and the database structure is defined to include at least one aspect that is changeable with respect to one of: association of variable values with a key variable; association of variable values in at least one table; table name and labeling; variable name and labeling; aliases; table type; variable type; table dimensions; field length; variable numeric format; variable string format; identification of key variables; conditions for uniqueness; conditions for null-ability; and, default values.

14. A dataprocessing system for manipulating a database, comprising at least one programmed processor responsive to computer-executable instructions configured for:

providing a set of schema instructions defining a database structure according to a preexisting schema;

providing a corresponding set of schema instructions defining the database according to a modified schema;

parsing the schema instructions for both the preexisting schema and the modified schema, so as to produce two logical syntax trees wherein the database structure is defined by at least a subset of structure types and attributes of which at least one differs between the preexisting schema and the modified schema;

comparing the two logical syntax trees to generate a set of differences between said structure types and attributes of the subset;

generating from the differences a set of database modification commands for altering a database according to the preexisting schema, to a database according to the modified schema, with respect to the structure types and attributes of the subset.